

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-12 and 14-23 are pending in the present application. Claims 2 and 13 have previously been cancelled without prejudice. Claims 1 and 7 have been amended and new claims 14-23 have been added. Support for the amendments and the newly added claims may be found throughout the specification and in the drawings. No new matter has been added.

Favorable reconsideration is respectfully requested.

I. Objections to the Specification

The specification has been objected to for incorporation by reference of the priority applications. In order to expedite prosecution, Applicants have amended the specification to remove the language "incorporation by reference."

Therefore, Applicants respectfully request that the objection to the specification be withdrawn.

II. Claim Rejections under 35 U.S.C. §102

Claims 1 and 3-12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by Sutton (U.S. 3,283,780).

Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection of claims 1 and 3-12 as being anticipated by Sutton.

Applicants' claim 1 requires a first unit having a tubular male part and a second unit having a tubular female part where the tubular male part includes a tubular portion fitting inside and surrounded by a portion of the tubular female part. Claim 1 also requires that the first unit includes first sealing elements and the second unit includes second sealing elements, the first sealing elements and the second sealing elements are mutually lockingly engageable wherein the mutual engagement establishes a lock between the first and second sealing elements to keep the first unit and the second unit together with the tubular portion of the male part extending inside the female part.

Sutton is directed to a pipe coupling having two identical units 13 and 13a. (Col. 2, line 32.) One object of the invention is to provide a coupling having two identical units having complimentary interlocking means. (Col. 1, lines 14-16.) Another object of the invention of Sutton is to provide mating edges on the coupling having a series of

annularly arranged complementary fingers and recesses, alternately disposed for interlocking engagement to prevent the rotary movement of one unit with respect to the other. (Col. 1, lines 25-29.) Sutton further discloses a separate locking device including two handles 31 and 31a lying in parallel along the periphery of the coupling as shown in FIG. 5, to cause the respective lock rods 38 and 38a to be pulled inwardly to draw the coupling units together in a locked position. Sutton is directed to providing two identical units and clearly fails to teach or suggest a first unit having a tubular male part and a second unit having a tubular female part where the tubular male includes a tubular portion fitting inside and surrounded by a portion of the tubular female part. Sutton further fails to teach or suggest that first sealing elements and second sealing elements are mutually lockingly engageable wherein the mutual engagement establishes a lock between the first and second sealing elements to keep the first unit and the second unit together with the tubular portion of the male part extending inside the female part. Instead, Sutton teaches separate locking handles 31 and 31a that lock the identical units together. The gaskets 28 and 28a that form a seal between the two identical units contact each other, but in no way provide a lock to keep the first unit and the second unit together.

In contrast, Applicants' claim 1 requires a first unit having a tubular male part and a second unit having a tubular female part where the tubular male part includes a tubular portion fitting inside and surrounded by a portion of the tubular female part. In addition, claim 1 further requires first and second sealing elements configured for being mutually lockingly engageable wherein the mutual engagement establishes a lock between the first and second sealing elements to keep the first unit and the second unit together with the tubular portion of the male part extending inside the female part. Clearly, Sutton fails to teach each and every claimed element of claim 1 as required by 35 U.S.C. § 102.

Applicants respectfully request that the rejection of claims 1 and 3-12 under 35 U.S.C. § 102 (b) be withdrawn.

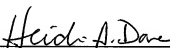
III. Summary

It is respectfully asserted that pending claims 1 and 3-12 properly define the invention and that the invention is both novel and non-obvious. The newly added claims 14-23 are also novel and non-obvious over the art of record. Claims 14 and 19 require that the first and second sealing elements establish a leak-proof seal and also interlock to prevent withdrawal of the male part from the female part. In addition, claims 14 and 19 require that disengagement of the first and second sealing elements arises when the first face is moved along the second face when the tubular female portion is twisted relative to the tubular male portion to provide a force in the axial direction to separate the first unit and the second unit.

Allowance of the present claims is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner wish to discuss any of the above submissions in more detail, the Examiner is asked to please call the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,



Heidi A. Dare
Registration No. 50,775
Attorney for Applicants

BRINKS HOFER GILSON & LIONE
P.O. BOX 10395
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60610
(312) 321-4200